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Panel slashes Salvador arms aid

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A House panel has cut in half the administration's request for \$60 million in additional military aid to El Salvador, while at the same time yesterday the Senate was holding a rare secret session to discuss CIA involvement in Nicaragua.

President Reagan, in an effort to stem the tide of congressional opposition to the administration's bat-

tle against leftist insurgents in Central America, will address a joint session of Congress and a nationwide television audience at 8 o'clock tonight. There were hints at the White House that Reagan may offer previously undisclosed information on the guerrilla war.

The 7-5 vote by the House Appropriations subcommittee on foreign operations to slash the Salvador aid to \$30 million followed a tie vote, 6-6, that would have barred any decision at all for 90 days. The compromise was engineered by Chairman Clarence D. Long, D-Md., who just returned from El Salvador.

The Senate's secret session was held to debate the CIA role in aiding insurgents opposing the government of Nicaragua. That issue, like aid to El Salvador, has caused Congress to challenge administration aid requests while examining U.S. policy in the region.

While the House Appropriations subcommittee was debating aid, members of the House Select Committee on Intelligence met with the president at the White House to discuss U.S. involvement in Central America, and afterward the chairman and ranking Republican on the panel said more may be made public tonight.

Because of the controversy the president requested the unusual joint session of Congress, held normally once a year for the State of the Union address, so he can present the administration's case to

the nation. The address will be broadcast by network television at 8 p.m.

Intelligence Committee Chairman Edward P. Boland, D-Mass., asked if the president will present "any new and convincing arguments" to support his request for greater military aid to El Salvador's elected government, said:

"I think he'll discuss that (tonight). I think he might target on that."

"This was a general discussion on our policy in the area," Boland said, noting that the administration is "concerned about the flow of arms into El Salvador and the assistance given to the guerrillas in El Salvador ... sparked from Nicaragua and Cuba."

The committee's top Republican, J. Kenneth Robinson of Virginia, said, "You will learn some things tomorrow night that you haven't learned up to now."

Meanwhile, it was disclosed that Boland has proposed cutting off all aid to Nicaraguan rebels and replacing it with money to help democratic governments in Central America stop the clandestine flow of arms into their countries.

Unlike the reported CIA assistance to the Nicaraguan rebels, Boland's proposal would establish a fund openly maintained under congressional approval. Funds for CIA covert activities are approved in a classified budget withheld from public view.

Boland's proposal would end all CIA aid to the rebels in 45 days. Congressional sources said that in the Senate Intelligence Committee, Sen. Dave Durenberger, R-Minn., is sponsoring a similar amendment to cut off funds for the CIA-backed Nicaraguan rebels.

Reagan, responding to congressional pressure, will announce tonight who he is naming as special envoy to negotiate among all factions for open elections aimed at resolving political turmoil in El Sal.

That and several other commitments came in a letter to Long from Secretary of State George Shultz as part of a broad administration effort to build support for its policy in Central America.

Boland said after the meeting he still believes "we have a problem" reconciling the CIA's covert activities in Nicaragua with his 1982

"Boland amendment" barring covert aid to insurgents for the purpose of overthrowing the leftist Sandinista government.

Long said he agreed to \$30 million in return for a written promise from Shultz that Reagan will appoint the special envoy.

In the letter to Long, the secretary said Reagan will name "a senior U.S. official of ambassadorial rank" to "assist the Salvadorans in their efforts to find a basis for a dialogue with their opponents on the terms and conditions for free, fair and safe elections."

Former Sen. Richard Stone, D-Fla., who chaired the subcommittee on Latin American affairs and has been closely aligned with Reagan's policies in the region, is considered a leading candidate for the job.

Shultz said "participants in these discussions may raise any issue they wish," but the United States "will not support negotiations for power-sharing" between the government and the rebels.

"We're getting something for our money. Whether it works or not, we've done our best," said Long, who returned Monday from a two-day visit to El Salvador.

A Senate appropriations subcommittee voted last month to authorize the full \$60 million. With the two subcommittees in disagreement, the lower figure of \$30 million will prevail without further congressional action.

At the request of Sen. Christopher Dodd, D-Conn., the Senate met for about 90 minutes in secret session to discuss charges that the